

78. (new) The blank of claim 76 further comprising a maximum tantalum grain size of less than 50 microns at the target surface.

79. (new) The blank of claim 76 further comprising an average grain size of about 25 microns.

80. (new) The blank of claim 76 produced from a frictionless forged billet.

81. (new) A tantalum sputtering target blank predominately comprising tantalum and having a thickness; the target having a substantially uniform crystallographic orientation $\{x,y,z\}$ throughout the thickness; wherein x, y and z are integers, and wherein two or more of x, y and z can be the same as one another.

82. (new) The blank of claim 81 further comprising an average grain size of about 25 microns.